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C O N F I D E N T I A L DUBLIN 000313

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TAGS: [MARR](#) [KPKO](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EI](#) [SU](#) [XY](#)
SUBJECT: IRELAND CONSIDERING REDEPLOYMENT OF PEACEKEEPERS

Classified By: DCM JONATHAN S. BENTON, FOR REASONS 1.4 (B), (D)

¶1. (C) Summary and Action Request. On March 23, the DCM met with Irish Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) Deputy Political Director Colm O'Floinn and UN/Terrorism and Illicit Drugs Director John Deady regarding GOI plans for the potential redistribution of its peacekeeping forces by the end of 2006. Earlier, Ambassador, DCM and DATT had a similar discussion with Irish Department of Defense (DOD) Secretary General Michael Howard. O'Floinn and Deady expressed concerns over the UN's lack of a plan for replacing the Irish/Swedish Quick Reaction Force Peacekeepers, noting that, rather than tying a Swedish/Irish departure to a closure of the QRF, they should be at least looking for replacements if necessary. They added that the GOI is considering a redeployment of its forces to Darfur. Embassy requests coordinated USG views on where we feel the Irish contingent would most usefully go, in order to help steer Irish peacekeeping decisions. End summary and action request.

Irish peacekeepers to leave Liberia?

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¶2. (C) Ambassador, DCM and DATT met March 8 with Irish Department of Defense Secretary General Michael Howard, and on March 23, DCM and emboffs met with Department of Foreign Affairs Deputy Political Director and Security Affairs Director Colm O'Floinn and UN/Terrorism and Illicit Drugs Director John Deady regarding GOI plans for the potential redistribution of its peacekeeping forces. O'Floinn and Deady said that by the end of 2006, Ireland is likely to redeploy Irish soldiers that are currently serving in Liberia, but has yet to decide where to send these troops. The GOI can deploy up to 850 troops overseas, and generally likes to have as close to that number) a huge percentage of their standing forces - deployed as possible. There are about 450 troops in Liberia, making it Ireland's largest overseas deployment at this time and the largest Western national force in Liberia. They added that Ireland supports the need for the presence of a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) in Liberia and expressed disappointment that the UN has yet to formulate plans on replacing their Liberian contingency if it leaves.

¶3. (C) Howard, O'Floinn, and Deady, noted the following points regarding their African peacekeeping deployments:

--In Liberia, The Swedes comprise one third of the QRF, with the Irish making up the other two thirds. On March 10, the Swedish government informed the GOI that it intends to pull its assets out of Liberia at the end of the year in order to refit into a Nordic Battlegroup scheme. Ireland has had a

similar timetable for some time.

--The GOI is still not completely convinced, however, that Liberia will be stable enough to leave at the end of the year. Deady relayed some concern that supporters of former Liberian president Charles Taylor may "pull some stunts" over his likely extradition and prosecution.

--Although the DPKO office is "pressuring" Ireland to be flexible, there is some irritation at the Irish DOD and DFA that it seems to be only looking at the Swedish/Irish forces to carry out the rapid reaction function in Liberia. They are open to arguments to stay (they may be more flexible on that score than the Swedes), but feel a Swedish/Irish departure should not necessarily spell the end of QRF.

--The Irish government has publicly said it plans to send a contingent to the Congo, but that unit will be very small (newspapers have said ten soldiers) and might not be affected by a Liberia decision. The Irish DOD still has serious security concerns about the mission and LTG James Sreenan, Chief of Staff of the IDF, has stated that the IDF will only participate if the deployed force is robust and contains sufficient resources to accomplish the mission.

Battlegroups and Irish Legislation

14. (SBU) A significant part of neutral Ireland's peacekeeping strategy is to participate in an EU battlegroup.

Their most concrete planning is currently with the Swedes, although they are keeping lines open with others for possible inclusion if arrangements to be paired with the Swedes do not work out. Irish overseas military deployment is potentially hampered by the self-imposed "triple lock" on overseas deployments, which requires a formal government decision, parliamentary approval, and a clear UN mandate prior to any deployment overseas of the Irish Defence Forces. The Irish DOD is spearheading a government effort to enact new legislation that will make conditions for overseas military deployments clearer, including by noting an exception from the "triple lock" for very small deployments, training missions, and emergency humanitarian deployments. Currently, deployments of 12 or less soldiers are permitted without the "triple lock" but the legality of such deployments is questionable. Proposed legislation would also broaden the language required of a UNSC resolution to "authorize" Irish participation. Although the government would like to get this legislation introduced and acted upon before the summer recess, the impending national parliamentary election cycle (probably May of 2007) could get in the way. Both DFA and DOD interlocutors indicated failure to pass the proposed legislation will not affect possible African Deployments in the short run.

Darfur

15. (C) If it does not pull its forces out of Liberia, Ireland will be in no position to send forces to Darfur. If it does pull out of Liberia by the end of the calendar year, however, it expects it will probably be part of a Western (probably rapid reaction) force in Darfur. The Irish Defense Department expects that it would take at least 2-3 months to "refit" its Liberia contingent for Darfur. With a small number of standing forces, the roughly 400-500 troops that would go to Darfur would essentially be the same ones rotated in and out of Liberia at the present time.

Comment

16. (C) The Irish are clearly deciding what to do next with their limited number of forces informally dedicated to peacekeeping in Africa. The assumption of the diplomats and the military leadership (as well as, we believe, the politicians and the uniformed military) is that Ireland will continue to keep at least 700 troops overseas, with approximately 450 in Africa. If they leave Liberia, they will go elsewhere in Africa. As they decide what to do next, the desires of the UN leadership and DPKO will weigh the

heaviest. But the GOI will also be sensitive to EU politics, EU Battlegroup configuration, and U.S. concerns. We request coordinated guidance from the Department so that we may convey U.S. views to the Irish in time to influence their decision.

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